

SOC 419: Culture and Society

Spring 2021: January 13th – May 13th

Instructor and Contact Information

Instructor: Rina James

Pronouns: they/them/theirs (Not sure what this means? Just ask, I'm happy to explain.)

Email: rinajames@email.arizona.edu

Office: Social Sciences Bldg., Room 412

Virtual office hours: by appointment (email to schedule)

Description of Course

This course explores sociological perspectives on culture, including the challenges in defining and measuring culture, and the impact culture has on individual lives. Students will learn how culture has been conceptualized by both sociology's founding theorists and contemporary sociologists working in this subfield today, and how and why the study of culture is important for deepening our understanding of the social world. Then, we will build on these foundations to identify how the material and immaterial elements of culture are produced, altered, and consumed. Finally, we will explore the relationship between culture and social structure, including the interplay between culture, social interaction, social inequalities, deviance, and social change. Throughout the course, students will be asked to apply their understandings of culture in a critical analysis of the world around them.

Course Prerequisites or Co-requisites

None

Course Format and Teaching Methods

This course is fully web-based. All readings, assignments, and class discussions will be completed through the D2L course site. The weekly assignments include reading notes and discussion board participation. The D2L 'Announcements' page will be used to communicate any important course information throughout the semester. A specific outline of the activities you are expected to complete each week is included in the course schedule. Students are responsible for managing their time and technology to ensure work is completed on time. No late work will be accepted for 'internet problems' unless the issue is caused by a U of A network outage or D2L-wide issues; I recommend submitting work early to avoid unforeseen technology issues. Please note that all due dates/times reflect the local time here in Tucson.

Questions regarding the course should be posted on the D2L Discussion board called "Ask the Instructor." This ensures that answers to questions regarding assignments, course policies, and D2L navigation are available to all students. It also allows students to receive assistance from their peers in addition to the instructor. Be sure to check the syllabus before posting questions, and do not email questions about the course to the instructor. Emails regarding personal issues, however, can be sent to rinajames@email.arizona.edu. You can expect a response within 24 hours during the week – I do not respond to student emails on the weekends, so please ensure any urgent emails are sent by 4pm Friday, so they may be addressed prior to that.

Course Objectives

By the end of the course students are expected to be able to:

- Evaluate the different ways classical and contemporary sociologists have defined culture
- Describe major theories, areas of study, and important concepts employed in the sociological study of the culture
- Explain the relationship between culture and social inequalities, including those based on gender, race, and class
- Demonstrate critical thinking and reasoning skills, and the ability to apply the sociological concepts of the class to their own experiences.

Expected Learning Outcomes

Knowledge of social institutions: students will be able to demonstrate knowledge of the key social institutions in sociology (the family, education, religion, work/economy, and/or law/political institutions) and their interconnections

Knowledge of how to think critically about social issues in contemporary society: Students will be able to demonstrate critical thinking skills, complex reasoning, and written communication skills.

Knowledge of social inequality: students will be able to demonstrate knowledge of social inequalities in contemporary societies based on class, gender, race, and/or sexual orientation. Students will also demonstrate knowledge about how to critically evaluate arguments about and solutions to inequality and diversity in society.

Required Materials

All materials required for the course will be available on the D2L course page, or through the University of Arizona library's online collection. Content will include journal articles and book chapters, as well as short lectures using VoiceThread.

Absence and Class Participation Policy

Participation in the course is vital to student success. As this an online course, there are no lectures or required meeting times. However, **if you anticipate being unable to meet assignment deadlines due to illness or other personal circumstances, please contact the instructor, preferably in advance if possible – due the ongoing pandemic and the logistical and personal difficulties it brings for many students, I aim to be as flexible as possible.** If you are experiencing unexpected barriers to your success in your courses, the Dean of Students Office is a central support resource for all students and may be helpful. The Dean of Students Office is located in the Robert L. Nugent Building, room 100, or call 520-621-7057.

The UA's policy concerning Class Attendance, Participation, and Administrative Drops is available at: <http://catalog.arizona.edu/policy/class-attendance-participation-and-administrative-drop>

The UA policy regarding absences for any sincerely held religious belief, observance or practice will be accommodated where reasonable, <http://policy.arizona.edu/human-resources/religious-accommodation-policy>.

Absences pre-approved by the UA Dean of Students (or Dean Designee) will be honored. See: <https://deanofstudents.arizona.edu/absences>

Syllabus Assignment

Earn three extra credit points by proving you read the syllabus and emailing me a picture of a cat. It doesn't have to be your cat, but if it is then I'd also like to know their name. If you don't like cats, you can pick a different animal. Or even a plant. I'm not picky.

Makeup Policy for Students Who Register Late

Students who register after the course start date must make up all assignments within **one week** of enrolling in the course.

Assignments and Grading

Syllabus Quiz (5%): The first assignment for the course is to read through the syllabus and take a short quiz to indicate that you understand the basic course requirements and expectations. **The syllabus quiz must be submitted by 11:59pm on 1/17.**

Reading Notes (25%): Students are expected to take notes on the weekly readings. Notes may be typed or handwritten – if you choose to handwrite your notes, they will need to be scanned and uploaded as a PDF so that I can review them (please submit them as a single file – instructions on how to combine images into a single file can be easily found through a quick Google search). Be sure that scans are legible, as credit will not be given for unreadable notes. Reading notes will be graded pass/fail, and should clearly demonstrate that you have done the assigned readings for the week. There is no required format for these – bullet points, short summaries, or similar are all acceptable. An appropriate length is between ½ and a full page per reading, depending on formatting (summary or bullet points) and medium (typed vs. handwritten, as the latter will be longer). Reading notes must be submitted for 12 of the 16 weeks of the course, meaning you may miss up to three of these without penalty, at your discretion. Note that no reading notes are due during Week 9 of the course. **Reading notes must be submitted by 11:59pm on Sunday each week, starting Week 2.**

Discussion posts and responses (20%): Each week, you will be asked to make a post on the D2L discussion board, and reply to at least one of your peers' posts. **Posts and responses are due Sundays at 11:59pm.** A specific prompt for your post will be provided at the beginning of each week, asking you to reflect or build on the concepts presented in that week's materials. Tasks may include answering a specific discussion question (for example, asking you to apply concepts to your own life, or compare/contrast author's arguments), or review short outside materials and providing a brief summary of how they relate to the class. Discussion posts should be 1 – 2 paragraphs and engage substantively with the material. Similarly, responses must also be substantive, raising a question, critiquing, or expanding on a classmate's post. Cursory comments such as "this is a good point," or "I agree/disagree" will not receive credit. Discussion posts and responses must be submitted for 13 of the 16 weeks of the course, meaning you may miss up to three of these without penalty, at your discretion.

Short answer exams (45%): There are three short-answer exams required. You will be asked to write 500 – 750 words answering a specific question (or related questions) on the content covered in the previous units of the course. The first short answer exam will cover Weeks 1 -5; the second will cover Weeks 6 – 10; the third will cover Weeks 11 – 16. Responses should be detailed, and make direct questions to the course readings. Please include your name and a word count at the top of the document, a References page at the end, and submit as a Word document or PDF file. Students also have the option of choosing to revise and resubmit one of the three short answer exams for a better grade before the end of the semester.

Lessons Learned Essay (5%): In addition to the final paper, students will write at least 750 words about the five most important things you learned in this course. Each item should be numbered clearly, and emphasize substantive knowledge (i.e. conceptual or empirical knowledge, not study skills or similar). This assignment is pass/fail, and will be evaluated based on whether what you discuss was part of the course, was accurately described based on course materials, was described in detail (i.e., you should write paragraphs rather than bullet points), and was at least 750 words. **Lesson learned papers should be submitted through D2L by 11:59pm on Sunday, May 9th.**

Final Examination or Project

There is no stand-alone final exam or assignment for this course. Instead, you will submit the last of the three short-answer exams during finals week. For general final exam regulations and information, see <https://www.registrar.arizona.edu/courses/final-examination-regulations-and-information>, and Final Exam Schedule, <http://www.registrar.arizona.edu/schedules/finals.htm>

Grading Scale and Policies

University policy regarding grades and grading systems is available at <http://catalog.arizona.edu/policy/grades-and-grading-system>

Grade distribution for this course:

A: 90-100
B: 80-89
C: 70-79
D: 60-69
F: <60

Requests for incomplete (I) or withdrawal (W) must be made in accordance with University policies, which are available at <http://catalog.arizona.edu/policy/grades-and-grading-system#incomplete> and <http://catalog.arizona.edu/policy/grades-and-grading-system#Withdrawal> respectively.

Dispute of Grade Policy Students with concerns regarding an assignment grade should contact the instructor within two days of the assignment grade being posted. Students are responsible for regularly reviewing the feedback on their assignments.

Honors Credit

Students wishing to contract this course for Honors Credit should email me to set up an appointment to discuss the terms of the contract. Information on Honors Contracts can be found at <https://www.honors.arizona.edu/honors->

[contracts.](#)

Course Schedule

Please look over the following schedule carefully so that you can plan your work accordingly. Also check the course website regularly for announcements. You must keep up with any changes in the schedule, which will be announced on D2L. **Please note that all assignments are due on Sundays at 11:59pm.**

Week 1: 1/13 – 1/17 – Course Introduction
Carefully read course syllabus and view video intro
Week 1 discussion posts/replies and syllabus quiz due Sunday 1/17 by 11:59pm
Week 2: 1/19 – 1/24 – What is Culture?
Read: 'What is Culture?' https://www.oercommons.org/courseware/lesson/11763/overview
Geertz, Clifford. 1973. "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture." Pp. 3–30 in <i>The Interpretation of Cultures</i> . Basic Books.
Total: 29 pages
Week 2 reading notes and discussion posts/replies due Sunday 1/24 by 11:59pm
Week 3: 1/25 – 1/31 – What is Culture? (cont.)
Read: 'Theoretical Perspectives on Culture' https://www.oercommons.org/courseware/lesson/11766/overview
Sewell Jr., William H. 2005. "The Concept(s) of Culture." Pp. 35-61 in <i>Practicing history: New directions in historical writing after the linguistic turn</i> .
Swidler, Ann. 1986. "Culture in Action: Symbols and Strategies." <i>American Sociological Review</i> 51(2):273-286.
Total: 39 pages
Week 3 reading notes and discussion posts/replies due Sunday 1/31 by 11:59pm
Week 4: 2/1 – 2/7 – Measuring Culture
Jepperson, Ronald L., and Ann Swidler. 1994. "What Properties of Culture Should We Measure?" <i>Poetics</i> 22(4):359–71.
Mohr, John W. 1998. "Measuring Meaning Structures." <i>Annual Review of Sociology</i> 24(1):345–70.
Total: 37 pages
Week 4 reading notes and discussion posts/replies quiz due Sunday 2/7 by 11:59pm
Week 5: 2/8 – 2/14 – Measuring Culture (cont.)
Rawlings, Craig, and John Mohr. 2017. "Four Ways to Measure Culture: Social Science, Hermeneutics, and the Cultural Turn." Pp. 70-113 in <i>The Oxford Handbook of Cultural Sociology</i> , edited by J. C. Alexander, R. N. Jacobs, and P. Smith. Oxford University Press.
Total: 43 pages
Week 5 reading notes and discussion posts/replies due Sunday 2/14 by 11:59pm

Week 6: 2/15 – 2/21 – Elements of Culture: Signs and Symbols
<p>Schudson, Michael. 1989. "How Culture Works: Perspectives from Media Studies on the Efficacy of Symbols." <i>Theory and Society</i> 18(2):153–80.</p> <p>Lizardo, Omar. 2016. "Cultural Symbols and Cultural Power." <i>Qualitative Sociology</i> 39(2):199–204.</p> <p>Total: 32 pages</p> <p>Week 6 reading notes and discussion posts/replies due Sunday 2/21 by 11:59pm Short answer exam #1 due Sunday 2/21 by 11:59pm</p>
Week 7: 2/22 – 2/28 – Elements of Culture: Norms and Values
<p>"Elements of Culture" https://openstax.org/books/introduction-sociology-2e/pages/3-2-elements-of-culture (Read sections on 'Values and Beliefs' and 'Norms')</p> <p>Wuthnow, Robert. 2008. "The Sociological Study of Values." <i>Sociological Forum</i> 23(2):333–43.</p> <p>Frye, Margaret. 2012. "Bright Futures in Malawi's New Dawn: Educational Aspirations as Assertions of Identity." <i>American Journal of Sociology</i> 117(6):1565–1624. doi: 10.1086/664542. (Please note the page count for this is deceptively long: read pp. 1-29 in the pre-print – no need to review the Appendix.)</p> <p>Total: 39 pages</p> <p>Week 7 reading notes and discussion posts/replies due Sunday 2/28 by 11:59pm</p>
Week 8: 3/1 – 3/7 – Elements of Culture: Language
<p>Bernstein, Basil. 1964. "Elaborated and Restricted Codes: Their Social Origins and Some Consequences." <i>American Anthropologist</i> 66: 55–69.</p> <p>Santa Ana, Otto. 2018. "Proposition 187: Misrepresenting Immigrants and Immigration." Pp. 65-94 in <i>Brown Tide Rising: Metaphors of Latinos in Contemporary American Public Discourse</i>. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.</p> <p>Total: 43 pages</p> <p>Week 8 reading notes and discussion posts/replies due Sunday 3/7 by 11:59pm</p>
Week 9: 3/8 – 3/14 – Film
<p>Documentary: <i>Precious Knowledge</i> (https://arizona.kanopy.com/video/precious-knowledge)</p> <p>In lieu of spring break, we'll be taking things easy this week. Watch the documentary above, respond to the discussion prompt, and try to take a little time to rest.</p> <p>Discussion posts/replies due Sunday 3/14 by 11:59pm. No notes due this week.</p>
Week 10: 3/15 – 3/21 – Elements of Culture: Practice
<p>Lizardo, Omar. 2013. "Habitus" edited by B. Kaldis. <i>Encyclopedia of Philosophy and the Social Sciences</i> 405–7.</p> <p>Goffman, Erving. 1956. "The Nature of Deference and Demeanor." <i>American Anthropologist</i> 58(3):473–502.</p> <p>Total: 42 pages</p> <p>Week 10 reading notes and discussion posts/replies due Sunday 3/21 by 11:59pm</p>

<p>Week 11: 3/22 – 3/28 – Symbolic Boundaries</p> <p>Lamont, Michèle. 1992. <i>Money, Morals, and Manners: The Culture of the French and American Upper-Middle Class</i>. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Read Ch. 1 (Pp. 1-23) and Ch. 4 (pp. 88-114 and pp. 127-128 only).</p> <p>Total: 51 pages</p> <p>Week 11 reading notes and discussion posts/replies due Sunday 3/28 by 11:59pm</p>
<p>Week 12: 3/29 – 4/4 – Cultural Production and Consumption</p> <p>Peterson, Richard A., and N. Anand. 2004. "The Production of Culture Perspective." <i>Annual Review of Sociology</i> 30(1):311–34.</p> <p>Peterson, Richard A. and Roger M. Kern. 1996. "Changing Highbrow Taste: From Snob to Omnivore." <i>American Sociological Review</i> 61(5):900–907.</p> <p>Total: 30 pages</p> <p>Short answer exam #2 due Sunday 4/4</p> <p>Week 12 reading notes and discussion posts/replies due Sunday 4/4 by 11:59pm</p>
<p>Week 13: 4/5 – 4/11 – Subcultures</p> <p>Abramson, Corey M., and Darren Modzelewski. 2011. "Caged Morality: Moral Worlds, Subculture, and Stratification Among Middle-Class Cage-Fighters." <i>Qualitative Sociology</i> 34(1):143–75.</p> <p>Krenske, Leigh, and Jim McKay. 2000. "'Hard and Heavy': Gender and Power in a Heavy Metal Music Subculture." <i>Gender, Place & Culture</i> 7(3):287–304.</p> <p>Total: 49 pages</p> <p>Week 13 reading notes and discussion posts/replies due Sunday 4/11 by 11:59pm</p>
<p>Week 14: 4/12 – 4/18 – Culture and Cognition</p> <p>DiMaggio, Paul. 2002. "Why Cognitive (and Cultural) Sociology Needs Cognitive Psychology," 274-81 in <i>Culture in Mind: Toward a Sociology of Culture and Cognition</i>, edited by K. Cerulo. New York: Routledge.</p> <p>Brubaker, Rogers, Mara Loveman, and Peter Stamatov. 2004. "Ethnicity as Cognition." <i>Theory and Society</i> 33(1):31–64. (Read pp. 31 -47 only.)</p> <p>Total: 40 pages</p> <p>Week 14 reading notes and discussion posts/replies due Sunday 4/18 by 11:59pm</p>
<p>Week 15: 4/19 – 4/25 – Culture and Inequality</p> <p>Lizardo, Omar. 2010. "Culture and Stratification." Pp. 305–15 in <i>Handbook of Cultural Sociology</i>. London: Routledge.</p> <p>Vaisey, Stephen. 2010. "What People Want: Rethinking Poverty, Culture, and Educational Attainment." <i>The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science</i> 629(1):75–101.</p> <p>Total: 36 pages</p> <p>Week 15 reading notes and discussion posts/replies due Sunday 4/25 by 11:59pm</p>
<p>Week 16: 4/26 – 5/2 – Culture and Structure</p> <p>Sewell, William H. 1992. "A Theory of Structure: Duality, Agency, and Transformation." <i>American Journal of Sociology</i></p>

98(1):1–29.

Swidler, Ann. 1995. "Cultural Power and Social Movements." Pp. 25–40 in *Social Movements and Culture*, edited by H. Johnston and B. Klandermans. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Total: 44 pages

Week 16 reading notes and discussion posts/replies due Sunday 5/2 by 11:59pm

Week 17: 5/3 – 5/9 – Course Wrap-Up

Short answer exam #3 due Sunday 5/9 at 11:59pm

Lessons Learned Essay due Sunday 5/9 by 11:59pm

Week 18: 5/10 – 5/13 – Finals Week

Catch up on any remaining work if needed.

Classroom Behavior Policy

To foster a positive learning environment, students and instructors have a shared responsibility. We want a safe, welcoming, and inclusive environment where all of us feel comfortable with each other and where we can challenge ourselves to succeed. To that end, our focus is on the tasks at hand and not on extraneous activities (e.g., texting, chatting, reading a newspaper, making phone calls, web surfing, etc.). Additionally, the online discussions for the course should remain respectful and professional.

Threatening Behavior Policy

The UA Threatening Behavior by Students Policy prohibits threats of physical harm to any member of the University community, including to oneself. See <http://policy.arizona.edu/education-and-student-affairs/threatening-behavior-students>.

Accessibility and Accommodations

At the University of Arizona, we strive to make learning experiences as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience barriers based on disability or pregnancy, please contact the Disability Resource Center (520-621-3268, <https://drc.arizona.edu/>) to establish reasonable accommodations.

Code of Academic Integrity

Students are encouraged to share intellectual views and discuss freely the principles and applications of course materials. However, graded work/exercises must be the product of independent effort unless otherwise instructed. Students are expected to adhere to the UA Code of Academic Integrity as described in the UA General Catalog. See: <http://deanofstudents.arizona.edu/academic-integrity/students/academic-integrity>.

The University Libraries have some excellent tips for avoiding plagiarism, available at <http://new.library.arizona.edu/research/citing/plagiarism>.

Selling class notes and/or other course materials to other students or to a third party for resale is not permitted without the instructor's express written consent. Violations to this and other course rules are subject to the Code of Academic Integrity and may result in course sanctions. Additionally, students who use D2L or UA e-mail to sell or buy these copyrighted materials are subject to Code of Conduct Violations for misuse of student e-mail addresses. This conduct may also constitute copyright infringement.

UA Nondiscrimination and Anti-harassment Policy

The University is committed to creating and maintaining an environment free of discrimination; see <http://policy.arizona.edu/human-resources/nondiscrimination-and-anti-harassment-policy>

Our classroom is a place where everyone is encouraged to express well-formed opinions and their reasons for those opinions. We also want to create a tolerant and open environment where such opinions can be expressed without resorting to bullying or discrimination of others.

Additional Resources for Students

UA Academic policies and procedures are available at <http://catalog.arizona.edu/policies>
Student Assistance and Advocacy information is available at <http://deanofstudents.arizona.edu/student-assistance/students/student-assistance>

Confidentiality of Student Records

<http://www.registrar.arizona.edu/personal-information/family-educational-rights-and-privacy-act-1974-ferpa?topic=ferpa>

Financial Support

The Richard H. Tyler Student Emergency Fund can support students experiencing temporary financial hardships. This appears to apply to graduate students and undergraduate students. Apply for funds from:
https://uarizona.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_1TA1XvxC1kgrN1b

Food Support

Research shows that a large percentage of undergraduates face housing and/or food insecurity and it is reasonable to believe numbers have worsened during the current crisis. In addition to Pima County resources, the campus has a food pantry to help reduce food insecurity: <https://campuspantry.arizona.edu/>

Academic advising (undergrads)

If you have questions about your academic progress this semester, or your chosen degree program, advisors at the Advising Resource Center can guide you toward university resources to help you succeed.

Life challenges (undergrads)

If you are experiencing unexpected barriers to your success in your courses, the Dean of Students Office is a central support resource for all students. Call 520-621-2057 or email DOS-deanofstudents@email.arizona.edu.

Physical and mental-health challenges

Recent surveys show that the current crisis is taking a toll on many people's mental and/or physical health, with a really large number of people who are college-aged having thought about suicide in the last 30 days. If you are facing physical or mental health challenges this semester, Campus Health offers medical and mental health care. For medical appointments, call (520-621-9202. For After Hours care, call (520) 570-7898. For the Counseling & Psych Services (CAPS) 24/7 hotline, call (520) 621-3334. If you or someone you know is in crisis, the National Suicide Prevention Hotline has English and Spanish speakers ready to talk 24/7 at: 1-800-273-8255

Finally, please notify the professor if your needs are not met with these resources and you are comfortable in doing so. This will enable them to access additional resources if available.

Subject to Change Statement

Information contained in the course syllabus, other than the grade and absence policy, may be subject to change with advance notice, as deemed appropriate by the instructor.